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COMMON SENSE IN ART.

WE have a very good friend, who, with a wide, genial love for nature, keen perceptions, and a mind capable of being influenced by the harmonies of the external world, always insists that he has no taste for Art. Yet before a really earnest and touching picture his face will kindle, and his eyes suffuse with most unmistakable evidence of his feeling.

He is the representative of a large class, for whose especial benefit we purpose to say something of one of the elements of greatness in all departments, one which, while it forces itself on our recognition in material matters, is, in Art, too often overrun and hidden by evil weeds which, from their glare and novelty, we imagine to be flowers of worth, viz. Common Sense. The mistake of our poor friend was in supposing that Art was something which, being etherial and ideal, was out of his range, and if, therefore, a work of Art did not affect him as it did others, he was sure that the fault lay in his bluntness of feeling. Now Art is governed as rigidly by common sense, as politics or morals, and when a man fails to be interested in a picture, he may be sure that one of two things is the case—either the picture was not an expression of genuine feeling on the part of the artist, or, if it was, it was of feeling towards an object for which the observer cared nothing, in nature, and of course nothing in artistic representation. When the Greek artist called the populace in to look at and criticise his picture, a shoemaker gave his opinion as to the artistic rendering of the shoe—the artist replied “well,” and was doubtless benefited. He checked him, however, when he attempted to give his opinion as to the merits of the face, by saying, “the shoemaker must not go beyond his last.”

Now the course of the artist, both in receiving the first criticism and rejecting the second, was an exemplification of his common sense. That shoemaker *may* have had a soul above shoes; we suppose for the sake of illustration that he had not, and that he was what every man ought to be, devoted to the realization of something he loved. We will suppose that he had a fine, artistic perception of the fit of a shoe, and was annoyed that the painter had put one

which seemed to him ugly, on his subject. He was thus far a competent critic, and so far had a taste for that representation which we call Art, in the common sense of the word. Yet he might not have had the slightest perception of fitness or elegance in the robe, or of beauty in the face.

Every man is so far a critic, and possessed of a taste for Art, as to be able to appreciate a fine reproduction of a thing which in the original he loved, *and no further*. We do not, moreover, believe that there is a man who does not so love something, that he would desire to see it represented and immortalized; and in his regards of Art there are two horns to the dilemma a picture may be placed in, with reference to him. It may be too high or too low for his feelings, and in the former case, as much as in the latter, he is incapable of loving it, and if he have the humility, which men of true feeling always do have, he will not be able to distinguish between the two positions, since he will confidently believe that if people do love it, there must be in it something worthy love, and it is owing to his blindness that he cannot find it.

This was the position our poor friend stood in; he did love Nature, but recognizing in the artist the legitimate interpreter of her, he deemed himself void of understanding, because the commentaries offered to him were incomprehensible. He saw Nature in strange vagaries, and garments, to him, most unbecoming her simplicity and divinity; and, too humble to defy the authority of the perhaps self-chosen priest at the shrine of Beauty, he gave up despairingly all hope of ever seeing truly. How many there may be like him in the world, we have no idea, but we do know that they are sufficiently numerous to make it worth while to give them a lesson, if we, too, are not presuming on a calling.

Let it be remembered that the subject of the picture—the material object or objects from which it is constructed—are the essential parts of it. If you have no love for them, you can have no genuine feeling for the picture which represents them. You may have a kind of admiration for the masterly treatment, and remarkable technical qualities, but that does not constitute love for Art—it is only an intellectual perception of power. We love Nature

and Beauty—we *admire* the artist who renders them in his works. Thus a man interested in raising stock above all other things, will love cattle-pieces, and will be a good judge of one;—better, perhaps, than any artist; for, though the latter might tell you that it was treated broadly, and well composed, the former could tell you that it was true and expressive. The man to whom Nature, in her inanimate forms, has been a delight all his early life, will love a landscape, and be better capable of feeling the merits of it than any city-bred artist, and so through the category of men and things. They only are capable of being just critics of Art who have first learned to love the things that Art deals with.

If, then, a man is really destitute of the emotions of taste, it is because he has no love for Nature, and not because it requires, for appreciating pictures on canvas, faculties different from those which receive impressions from Nature. The man who loves Nature, loves Art also; and if he does not love pictures as well, it is because they have not reproduced images of the things he loves.

The sum of COMMON SENSE IN ART is, that men are fitted to criticise pictures—not by the time they spend in galleries and studios, but by the extent of their knowledge of Nature, and the comprehension of her mysteries. There is a knowledge of the technical excellences of the studio which, as it ought, comes after, and is learned by study, but it must be based on love for Nature, or it is as idle as wind blowing across a sand-desert. We have more to say on this topic hereafter.

Reminiscences.

CHARLES WILSON PEALE.

A SKETCH BY HIS SON.

I HAD a brother whose imagination was so vivid, that by often hearing domestic anecdotes of events that occurred before he was born, it was sometimes difficult to persuade him that he had not himself witnessed them. My imagination is not so prolific, but my memory is sufficiently good to recollect some of the circumstances of my father's early life, gathered from his own lips, which may be interesting to the rising artists of America, and to those who love to watch the development of talent. Although ingenious from his youth, and fond

of novel exertions, it was not until he was twenty-four years old that he commenced the career of an artist; although he had previously had some practice in pencil-drawings from flowers, and pen-and-ink copies from prints. Having rented a house in Annapolis, on the parlor-wall of which he found two portraits, too bad to be cared for by the previous occupant, he thought, bad as they were, if he could do anything as well, he could soon learn to do something better; and, although he was already distinguished among his friends, for many ingenious and handicraft works, besides his business as a saddler and harness-maker, he yet apprehended the possibility of failure in this new enterprise. He therefore silently obtained from a coach-maker, canvas, paints, and brushes, and, in secret, with the aid of a mirror, painted a portrait of himself, which he fixed in the frame of the abdicated gentleman, to the astonishment and admiration of his friends, who gave him no rest till he also took their portraits.

To obtain a better stock of materials, he went to Philadelphia, but found no artist there to direct him, nor a paint-shop to supply him, but was fortunate to find in a book-store "The Handmaid to the Arts," in two volumes. These he diligently read during a week, and then sallied forth with his memoranda of needful articles, and procured the most of them at an apothecary's shop, with which he hastened back to Annapolis.

Bainbridge Wollaston, Bainbridge, and Hesselius, British artists, in their periodical circuit of the colonies, had gratified the taste for family portraits. Hesselius alone remained; having married a lady of some fortune, residing near Annapolis. My father's impulse was to visit him, and by engaging him to paint his wife's portrait, acquire some knowledge of the proper process of painting; but Mr. Hesselius, on learning the circumstances of his young applicant, generously allowed him to see him paint one or two portraits, for which the student felt himself bound to present the country gentleman painter with a handsome saddle and bridle of his own make. Then, selling out his stock in that business, he devoted himself to painting; and hearing of the celebrity of Copley, he made an effort, and went by sea to Boston, in a vessel owned by his brother-in-law, Captain Polk. Mr. Copley received him kindly, and gave him some instruction during the short time he could be absent from his family. On his return, his friends were so well assured of his genius for his new occupation, that they united in furnishing him with the means of going to London, in the year 1767. Charles Carrol, of Carrolton, and the agriculturalist, John B. Bardley, heading the list of contributors, who were to be repaid by paintings on the return of the artist.

In London, he studied under the direction of Mr. West, and drew in the Royal Academy; but, although he replenished his funds a little by painting miniatures, they were exhausted at the end of a year, and he spoke of returning to America. Mr. West earnestly advised him to remain another year, and kindly invited him to make his house his home, which he declined; but it emboldened him to ask of his friends in Annapolis the means of prolonging his stay.

In London, he became acquainted with

an Italian, who taught him to model in wax, with which he executed some excellent anatomical heads and figures. On a visit that Trumbull paid to West's studio, his attention was diverted to the ticking of a hammer. "Oh," said Mr. West, "that is our ingenious young countryman, Mr. Peale, who, when he is not painting, amuses himself in repairing my locks and bells." This mechanical propensity continued during his whole life to divide his attention with painting. It was made evident in the portrait of himself, which he first painted, where he introduced, in the background, a clock of his own making. This picture, which he did not remember to have given away, was mislaid and lost sight of till the year 1801—37 years after, when I found it, among some revolutionary rubbish, having been employed to tie up a pound or two of whiting, which I washed off, and my father recognized his first attempt—well drawn and well colored.

In 1777, he removed to Philadelphia, where he was well employed in painting; but he became warmly interested in politics, serving as an active member of the Committee of Public Safety—was active in raising a volunteer company, and as lieutenant, and afterwards captain, was in the battles of Princeton, Trenton, and Germantown; yet, such was his energy of character, that he managed to paint in camp, several portraits in oil and miniature. It was whilst painting one of these, a miniature for Mrs. Washington, at the General's humble quarters, in a New Jersey farm-house, that Burgoyne's surrender was announced. My father sat, with his little table and painting apparatus, near the low window, but the chamber was so small, there was not room for another chair, and the General could only sit on the side of his bed. His aid, Colonel Tilghman, handed him the dispatch. On opening, and glancing over it, he earnestly exclaimed, "Burgoyne is taken!" and handed the letter to Tilghman, but instantly took it back, apparently from a conviction of the impropriety of showing an unread letter to a subordinate officer. He continued the sitting with a calm and satisfied air.

My father's interest in the revolutionary contest drew him into notice as a politician, and he was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly, where he voted for the abolition of slavery, and showed his consistency by liberating the slaves he had brought from Maryland. He also voted for the appointment of an agent for the sale of the confiscated estates of Tories. Several gentlemen were named for the office, which they declined. Having expressed his surprise, that after voting for the measure they should refuse to act, he was then named, and could not consistently refuse; but resolved that in executing the unpleasant office, he would not leave it in the power of any to say that he enriched himself by the misfortune of their forefathers, which he could easily have done, as he was allowed three months after every sale to pay the amount received; and on one occasion, could have realized, by the increased value of the property, fifty thousand dollars. It was such traits of character, his amiable temper, and his talents as a painter, that engaged for him the enduring friendship of Washington, who, when he met me, a boy, in the streets of Phila-

delphia, touched my head (and my heart), saying, "How is your *good* father?"—the same good father that was loved by West and the venerable Franklin, as well as by most of our revolutionary worthies. It will not be deemed amiss that I should here copy a letter he received from Dr. Franklin, the date of which is worthy of note:—

London, July 4th, 1771.

SIR,—I received your obliging letter of April 2d, and it gave me great pleasure to hear that you had met with such good encouragement at Philadelphia, and that you succeed so well in your business in your native country. If I were to advise you, it should be by great industry and frugality to secure a competency as early in life as may be; for as your profession requires good eyes, cannot so well be followed with spectacles, and therefore will not probably afford subsistence *so long* as some other employments, you have a right to claim proportionably larger rewards, while you continue able to exercise it to general satisfaction.

The Arts have always travelled westward, and there is no doubt of their flourishing hereafter on our side of the Atlantic, as the number of wealthy inhabitants shall increase, who may be able and willing suitably to reward them; since, from several instances, it appears that our people are not deficient in genius.

You have my best wishes for your prosperity and happiness, being with great regard,

Your faithful, humble servant,

B. FRANKLIN.

To Charles W. Peale.

My father's genius, such as it was, did not permit him to profit much by the prudential advice of Franklin—to make money when he could, and to keep it when he had it—but he always lived comfortably, and brought up a large family. He gained nothing by the privations of a soldier, or the broils of a statesman; and his benevolent charities and mechanical aberrations, though they increased his enjoyments, and gained him gratitude and praise, did not enlarge his coffer. It is a singular fact that for fifteen years he was the only portrait painter, of any reputation, in America, and might have profited largely by his Art; but he had a propensity always to be doing what nobody about him could do; with this he painted and made glasses and shagreen cases for his miniatures; with this he made himself a guitar, and learned to play on it, when it was a rare thing to see a guitar, and partly constructed a chamber organ; with this he contrived a series of transparent paintings, with varying effects of day and moonlight, and chiefly a perfect naval engagement; with this he invented a new mode of bridge building, and a machine for writing duplicate letters; with this he invented the first stove for burning anthracite coal, and various modes of economizing heat for warmth and cookery; this animated him in explorations, which cost him five thousand dollars, to procure a skeleton of the Mammoth; and this gave him an unconquerable perseverance in the countless duties of forming a Museum of Natural History, the first in America; and by inventing the first porcelain teeth, when they were experimenting with them in France, he prolonged the comforts of his old age, and those of a few friends. These were only some of his occupations, for I never saw him idle.

As a painter, his likenesses were strong, but never flattered; his execution spirited

and natural. It was his practice to compare his portraits, at a distance, along-side of his sitters; and at one time he painted with brush handles four feet long. His portraits of revolutionary characters form a precious gallery in the Hall of Independence. * * * It was the opinion of Colonel Trumbull, that if he could have confined his genius to the single object of painting, he would have ranked very high as an artist. He was one of the early members of the Philosophical Society, when Franklin was the president; and co-operated with me in the formation of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, in 1806. * * * The last years of his life he luxuriated in the enjoyments of a country life, near Germantown, with hanging gardens, grotto and fountain, and a hospitable table for all his friends. * * * His last painting was a full-length portrait of himself, at the age of 83. He died in his 85th year, in 1826, not of old age, but by an affection of the heart, induced by over exertion.

REMBRANDT PEALE.

The following is the first of the articles from London's *Architectural Magazine* (1837), promised some weeks back.

The Poetry of Architecture; or the Architecture of the nations of Europe, considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character. By KATA PHUSIN (JOHN RUSKIN).

NO I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE science of architecture, followed out to its full extent, is one of the noblest of those which have reference only to the creations of human minds. It is not merely a science of the rule and compass; it does not consist only in the observation of just rule, or of fair proportion; it is, or ought to be, a science of feeling more than of rule, a ministry to the mind more than the eye. If we considered how much less the beauty and majesty of a building depend upon its pleasing certain prejudices of the eye, than upon its rousing certain trains of meditation in the mind, it will show in a moment how many intricate questions of feeling are involved in the raising of an edifice; it will convince us of the truth of a proposition, which might at first have appeared startling, that no man can be an architect who is not a metaphysician. To the illustration of the department of this noble science, which may be designated the Poetry of Architecture, this and some future articles will be dedicated. It is this peculiarity of the Art which constitutes its nationality; and it will be found as interesting as it is useful, to trace in the distinctive characters of the architecture of nations, not only its adaptation to the situation and climate in which it has arisen, but its strong similarity to, and connection with, the prevailing turn of mind, by which the nation who first employed it is distinguished. I consider the task I have imposed upon myself the more necessary, because this department of the science, perhaps regarded by some who have no ideas beyond stone and mortar, as chimerical, and by others, who think nothing necessary but truth and proportion, as useless, is at a miserably low ebb in England. And what is the consequence? We have Corinthian columns placed beside

pilasters of no order at all, surmounted by monstrosified pepper-boxes, Gothic in form and Grecian in detail, in a building nominally and peculiarly national; we have Swiss cottages, falsely and calumniously so entitled, dropped in the brick fields around the metropolis; and we have staring, square-windowed, flat-roofed, gentlemen's seats, of the lath and plaster, mock-magnificent, Regent's Park description, rising on the woody promontories of Derwent-water.

How deeply is it to be regretted, how much is it to be wondered at, that in a country whose school of painting, though degraded by its system of meretricious coloring, and disgraced by hosts of would-be imitators of inimitable individuals, is yet raised by the distinguished talent of those individuals to a place of well deserved honor; and the studios of whose sculptors are filled with designs of the most pure simplicity, and most perfect animation—the school of architecture should be so miserably debased.

There are, however, many reasons for a fact so lamentable. In the first place, the patrons of architecture (I am speaking of all classes of buildings, from the lowest to the highest,) are a more numerous, and less capable class than those of painting. The general public, and I say it with sorrow, because I know it from observation, have little to do with the encouragement of the school of painting, beyond the power which they unquestionably possess, and unmercifully use, of compelling our artists to substitute glare for beauty. Observe the direction of public taste at any of our exhibitions. We see visitors, at that of the Society of Painters in water colors, passing Taylor with anathemas, and Lewis with indifference, to remain in reverence and admiration before certain amiable white lambs and water-lilies, whose artists shall be nameless.

We see them, in the Royal Academy, passing by Wilkie, Turner and Callcott, with shrugs of doubt or of scorn, to fix in gazing, enthusiastic crowds upon kettleful of witches, and His Majesty's ships So-and-So, lying-to in a gale, &c., &c. But these pictures attain no celebrity because the public admire them, for it is not to the public that the judgment is intrusted. It is by the chosen few, by our nobility, and men of taste and talent, that the decision is made, the fame bestowed, and the artist encouraged. Not so in architecture. There, the power is generally diffused. Every citizen may box himself up in as barbarous a tenement as suits his taste or inclination; the architect is his vassal, and must permit him not only to criticise, but to perpetrate. The palace, or the nobleman's seat, may be raised in good taste, and become the admiration of a nation; but the influence of their owner is terminated by the boundary of his estate: he has no command over the adjacent scenery, and the possessor of every thirty acres around him has him at his mercy. The streets of our cities are examples of the effects of this clashing of different tastes: and they are either remarkable for the utter absence of all attempt at embellishment, or disgraced by every variety of abomination.

Again, in a climate like ours, those few who have knowledge and feeling to distinguish what is beautiful, are frequently pre-

vented by various circumstances from erecting it.

John Bull's comfort perpetually interferes with his good taste, and I should be the first to lament his losing so much of his nationality, as to permit the latter to prevail. He cannot put his windows into a recess, without darkening his rooms; he cannot raise a narrow gable above his walls, without knocking his head against the rafters; and, worst of all, he cannot do either without being stigmatized by the awful, inevitable epithet of "a very odd man." But, though much of the degradation of our present school of architecture is owing to the want or the unfitness of patrons, surely it is yet more attributable to a lamentable deficiency of taste and talent among our architects themselves. It is true, that in a country affording so little encouragement, and presenting so many causes for its absence, it cannot be expected that we should have any Michael Angelo Buonarrotti. The energy of our architects is expended in raising "neat" poor-houses, and "pretty" charity-schools; and, if they ever enter upon a work of a higher rank, economy is the order of the day; plaster and stucco are substituted for granite and marble; rods of splashed iron for columns of verd-antique; and, in the wild struggle after novelty, the fantastic is mistaken for the graceful, the complicated for the imposing, superfluity of ornament for beauty, and its total absence for simplicity.

But all these disadvantages might in some degree be counteracted, all these abuses in a great degree prevented, were it not for the slight attention paid by our architects to that branch of the Art which I have above designated as the poetry of architecture. All unity of feeling (which is the first principle of good taste) is neglected; we see nothing but incongruous combination: we have pinnacles without height, windows without light, columns with nothing to sustain, and buttresses with nothing to support.

We have parish paupers smoking their pipes, and drinking their beer under Gothic arches and sculptured niches; and quiet old English gentlemen reclining on crocodile stools, and peeping out of the windows of Swiss chalets. I shall attempt, therefore, to illustrate the principle, from the neglect of which these abuses have arisen; that of unity of feeling, the basis of all grace, the essence of all beauty. We shall consider the architecture of nations as it is influenced by their feelings and manners, as it is connected with the scenery in which it is found, and with the skies under which it was erected; we shall be led as much to the street and the cottage as to the temple and the tower; and shall be more interested in buildings raised by feeling, than in those corrected by rule.

We shall commence with the lower class of edifices, proceeding from the road-side to the village, and from the village to the city; and, if we succeed in directing the attention of a single individual more pointedly to this most interesting department of the science of architecture, we shall not have written in vain.

THE Italians call every artist *maestro*. When they see one who practises an art, without making a profession of it, they say *si diletta*. Their expression of polite amusement and wonder, shows their thoughts on the subject.—*Gode!*